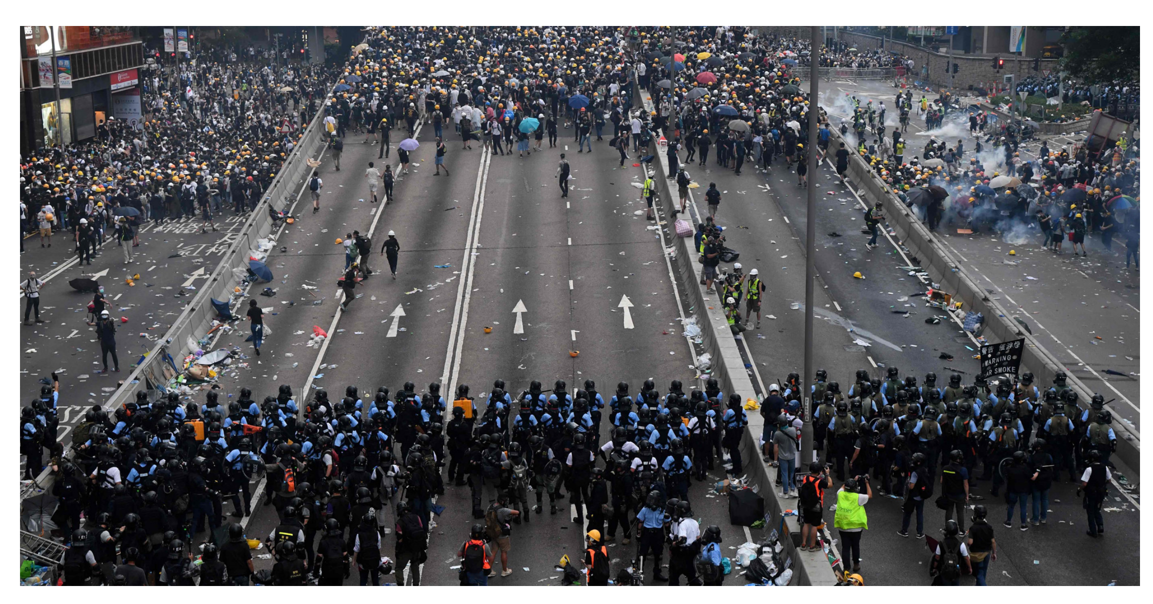






CLI CHÉ 2019-09-14

PROTESTS IN HK: A TALK WITH THE 'WORKERS GROUP'

DOCUMENTATION CHINA POLICE VIOLENCE, HONGKONG, MASS MOVEMENT, RIOT, SOCIAL CONDITIONS, WORKERS GROUP

The following interview was made over internet during the month of August. Comrades from different countries – some **Bad Kids of the World** – made questions about the anti-extradition movement to the **Workers Group**, a proletarian collective based in Hong Kong. We want to understand how the mass protests relates to the broader context of class struggle in the region. The text is being published simultaneously in English, French and Portuguese.

Bad Kids of the World [BKW]: Can you present to us the stakes of the fight against Extradition Bill and the impact that such a legal provision will have on everyday life, from the point of view of worker's material conditions of existence, but also on the side of the organizational capacity of the revolutionary groups and social movements?

Workers Group [WG]: I think this is one the most difficult questions to answer. It is quite clear that ordinary people are not going to be affected directly, even after the bill is passed. There are three kinds of people who are most seriously under threat.
1. The super rich people from China, who are escaping from the Chinese judiciary system in order to escape from the prosecution for commercial crimes, or internal conflicts within the Communist Party;
2. Political activists in Hong Kong. Since there is no political freedom in China at all, there is no organized opposition parties in the country. On the other way, we can say that Hong Kong is the only place within Chinese territory where some opposition parties exist. So, many of us believe that these political activists are under threat because of the bill.
3. They may not be Chinese or Hong Kong citizens, but they are people all over the world who are related to China but not welcome by China. Maybe they are NGO workers, religious people, business people, or anyone that the Chinese government did not like.

When you're talking about workers and everyday life, it is very important to understand that, almost all Hong Kong people are Chinese migrants or descendents of Chinese migrants. Many of them have relatives in mainland China and they go back to the home town for family gathering every year. On the other hand, since the 80's, the economic ties between Hong Kong and China is getting more and more complicated. And a lot of Hong Kong people are actually working cross-border, especially for the business sectors. First, it is the factory management and business people who go to mainland China to set up the factories. Later,

not only the manufacturing industries, but accountants, designers, engineers, NGO workers, social workers, or even university professors are developing connections and cooperations in China. On the other hand, a lot of Hong Kong people who cannot afford an apartment in Hong Kong may choose to buy an apartment in mainland China in order to keep their assets having a better value added. So that is the close tie of ordinary people with China. Many people also fear that anything happening to them in China may result as a criminal charge. If there is an Extradition Bill, they may also have trouble of being sent to China.

For the organizational capacity of revolutionary groups and the social movement… I would say that the organizational capacity is tiny. The Workers Group only consists of ten to twenty active members. Many people are doing very different things during the struggles, and we do not work in a very coordinated way. But, one characteristic of this kind of mass movement is that a lot of first-time protesters want to do a lot of things. That's why we are also recruiting new people to take part in different kinds of work. For example, we openly recruit some people to help in the street exhibition to show to the neighbourhood about the video of what it's happening in the struggles. On the other hand, we also recruit some new members to visit workers who have to work during the night. Many of them are suffering from the clash between the cops and the protesters. For example, the cleaning workers are directly exposed to tear gas without any protective device. So we are going to visit these workers to talk to them about how to protect themselves and what the struggle is about.

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